

REMARKS

Applicants appreciate the remarks in the present Office Action noting that claim 7 contains allowable subject matter. Reconsideration and allowance of the subject application, as amended, are respectfully requested.

Claim Amendments

Independent claim 1 has been amended to incorporate the teachings of allowable claim 7 and claim 5 from which allowable claim 7 directly depends. Accordingly, no new matter is believed to be added.

Claims 5 and 7 have been cancelled without prejudice.

Claim 6 has been amended to change its dependency from cancelled claim 5 to amended, independent claim 1. Accordingly, no new matter is believed to be added.

Claims 14-34 have been cancelled without prejudice as being directed to a non-elected group, there being no allowable generic or linking claim. These claims may be prosecuted in a divisional application.

Accordingly, claims 1-4, 6 and 8-13 are now pending.

Claim Rejection – 35 U.S.C. § 103

Claims 1-3, 5-8 and 10-13 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Epstein (U.S. Patent No. 6,743,154) in view of Openiano (U.S. Patent No. 5,139,261). Claim 4 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Epstein and Openiano in view of Butterfield (U.S. Patent No. 6,135,928). Claim 9 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Epstein and Openiano in view of O’Heir (U.S. Patent No. 5,864,333). Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and allowance in view of the above amendments and following comments.

Applicants appreciate the Examiner’s remarks on page 5 of the present Office Action noting that claim 7 is objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be

allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

With this amendment, Applicants have amended independent claim 1 to incorporate the limitations recited in allowable claim 7 and intervening claim 5. As such, Applicants respectfully submit that amended independent claim 1 is now in condition for allowance. The remaining claims depend, either directly or indirectly, from amended independent claim 1. Therefore, Applicants respectfully submit that the remaining claims are also allowable by virtue of their dependency from amended, independent claim 1 in addition to their own patentable limitations.

Accordingly, Applicants respectfully submit that all pending claims are now in condition for allowance. Thus, early allowance is earnestly solicited.

In the event the Examiner deems personal contact in this matter, the Examiner is invited to call the undersigned attorney at 603-668-6560.

In the event there are any fee deficiencies or additional fees are payable, please charge them to our deposit account No. 50-2121.

Respectfully submitted,

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